FLASHBACKS IN SPACE

Rip Van Winkle only slept 20 years, but he woke up to find a world very different from the one he went to sleep in. In Bellamy's LOOKING BACKWARD, Julian was mesmerized and awoke from his trance 113 years later to find the world had gone (-choke!) socialist. That was in 1888. By the end of that decade, Henry George Wells had sent his hero travelling into the deep deep future to discover the Eloi being raised for food by the Morlocks. Philip Francis Nowlan owed all of these people when he told the story of what happened in ARMAGEDDON 2419 A.D. (1928), but his predecessors were theorists, intellectuals, speculators--Nowlan, with perhaps a nod in the direction of Wells' THE WAR OF THE WORLDS, created the ultimate space fantasy hero in Anthony Rogers, a guy who wakes up after 492 years in suspended animation in a Pennsylvania coal mine to find himself involved in a war. It's the Americans in the jungle against the Mongols in the air. Nowlan's sequel, "The Airlords of Han," ran in AMAZING STORIES in August of 1928. Nowlan was a techno-freak who loved weaponry, one who made up his own theories of electricity. Tony and Wilma Deering hop around the jungle in anti-gravity belts as they plot against the Han airships above them. This grasshopper mode of travel was borrowed by Jerry Siegel in 1932 when he wrote the first SUPERMAN story for his science fiction fanzine. The rest of the character was borrowed from the Philip Wylie/Edwin Balmer collaboration, GLADIATOR (1930). Rogers and Wilma defeated the Mongols and got married. John Flint Dille, President of the National Newspaper Syndicate of America, thought it would be nice to have a futuristic comic strip. Lt. Dick Calkins did some roughs and by January 7, 1929, Anthony Rogers had become Buck Rogers and the space race was on. That same year, Alex Raymond would turn Buck into Flash Gordon and Wilma into Dale Arden, the art work would improve, but the basic conflict would remain the same: the good white world against the evil Asian menace, now personified in the character of Ming the Merciless, who would ultimately become the leader of the Klingons in 1966 and end up as Darth Vader in 1975. He was also Fu Manchu as you Sax Rohmer fans will recall. Buck, Flash, and Brick Bradford were the Science fantasy heroes of the thirties with Superman joining up in June of 1938 when Siegel and Schuster finally made a deal with National to publish his origin in ACTION COMICS. The switch was that Superman was an Extra-terrestrial, sent to Earth from Krypton by his scientist father. Buck, Flash, and Brick were all earthlings, whose survival in the face of danger had more to do with the plot manipulations of their creators than any inherent invulnerability. Buck had a disintegrator ray gun to protect him; Superman didn't need one; he WAS a weapon. Buck's ray gun said, "ZAP!" in the strip, something Robert Crumb must have noted in his childhood.

Much of the fantasy technology from the early stories has become reality in our time. Television was developed in 1928 and Nowlan probably knew of it. It was on display at various State Fairs by 1931, but not developed for mass use until the late forties. The "Televeye" became the Telestar. There were robots in BR a decade before Isaac Asimov made them popular in I,ROBOT (1942). The "electrohypnotic" test has become the Polygraph (lie detector) and the"echograph" is the Sonar, standard equipment on all ships and submarines. The idea of a "mother ship" and smaller ships or modules or pods comes from Nowlan. The airships of Han were similar to Zeppelins, but the Mongol ships in Calkins' strip were often circular discs similar to UFOs reported seen in the fifties. These were filmed in INVADERS FROM MARS, THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, and the circular shape has prevailed through CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND.

Is there anything original in all of STAR TREK? Hey, what about the transporter? Nope. Dr. Huer beamed Buck Rogers all the way to Jupiter, and remember THE FLY (1957). Well, Tony married Wilma back in ARMAGEDDON 2419 A.D., but that's how they did things back then. By 1966, James T. Kirk would only marry his ship, the Enterprise. Flash and Dale were always too busy fighting off Mongols or Lionmen to get married, and, he was from Yale, besides, so what can one say? Phasers? Just Buck's ray gun reduced. Lucas enlarged the phasers for STAR WARS. He wanted his gang to have bigger guns. Buck Rogers' Solar Scouts were the forerunners of the Trekkies.

Hey, that idea for THE FLY came from a 1942 BUCK ROGERS strip. Wilma Deering wound up invisible when her atoms didn't reassemble after she and Buck were transported to Jupiter. The idea of invisibility came from H. G. Wells THE INVISIBLE MAN (1897), showed up in Thorne Smith's TOPPER (1926), then in Russell Stamm's INVISIBLE SCARLET O'NEILL, on to the BUCK ROGERS episode, and finally into INVISIBLE GIRL in THE FANTASTIC FOUR. The most absurd use of invisibility was in WONDER WOMAN. She had an invisible airplane. The idea was swiped from Wolverton's SPACEHAWK (TARGET COMICS, June 1940-1942). Spacehawk had a robot pilot and could summon his ship telepathically. His jumping belt links him with Buck Rogers. The hornosaur links SPACEHAWK with Katz' THE FIRST KINGDOM (the Hornodon). You may want to trace Nowlan's PHONOVISION through SPACEHAWK into JAMES BOND (1950), STAR TREK (1966), and on to SPACE 1999 and BATTLESTAR GALACTICA. Or perhaps Nowlan's dogmen through Larry Todd's IT'S A DOG'S LIFE and on to Steve Lafler's DOGBOY.

I see more of Wells and Bellamy in ARMAGEDDON 2419 A.D., but one cannot discount the influence of Edgar Rice Burroughs who began writing his Mars stories as early as 1911, one of which was INVISIBLE MEN OF MARS. Nowlan was more socialist than capitalist: "There could be only a very limited degree of owning anything that might be classified as 'resources'. Resources of every description, for military safety and efficiency, belonged as a matter of public interest to the community as a whole. (ARMAGEDDON 2419 A.D., p. 22, Ace edition, 1962)." Indeed, most futuristic fiction comes from the theoretical writings of utopians, most of whom leaned toward socialism, being critical of the private accumulation of wealth. It has to be ironic that those who make fortunes writing about socialism become capitalists, joining the rich who are usually villains in their novels. What has happened in most futuristic fiction is the ascendence of technology over character a situation in which the form of economic or political control becomes rather meaningless. Happy to invent a lot of sophisticated weaponry on paper, Nowlan and most of his successors have seldom stopped to think about where the raw materials would come from to actually produce those weapons. These ROAD WARRIOR and ESCAPE TO NEW YORK films are throwbacks to early Nowlan. In a post-atomic war situation, where would all that ammunition come from? Ah, well, I get a kick out of all this stuff as I'm sure you do, but sometimes it's fun to take a look at it, to compare this and that, to ask what's new and what's just re-running for the zillionth time.

CLAY GEERDES

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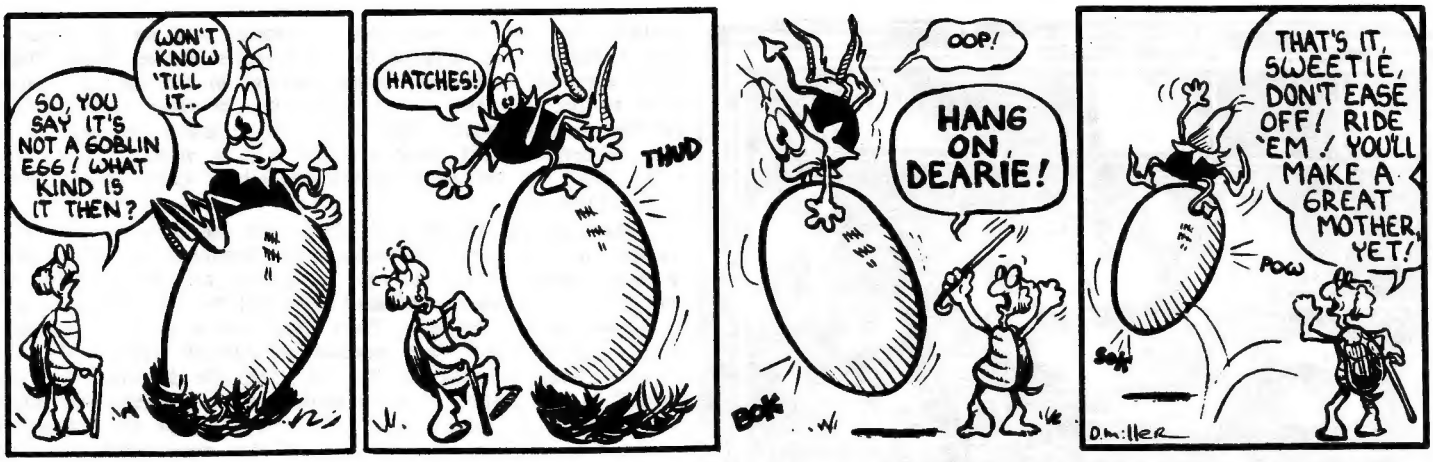
SO, YOU SAY IT'S NOT A GOBLIN EGG! WHAT KIND IS IT THEN?
WON'T KNOW 'TILL IT..
HATCHES!
THUD
OOP!
HANG ON, DEARIE!
BOK
THAT'S IT, SWEETIE, DON'T EASE OFF! RIDE 'EM! YOU'LL MAKE A GREAT MOTHER, YET!
POW
D.M:LLER

COMIX PLUGOLA

COMIX WAVE MINI-SERIES: BABYFAT 57, FRIED BRAINS 23 and 24, Bob Sheridan's ANTI-ARTIST 2, 3, and PUNGX 1, Jones and Wilson's RETROS 5, GRASS GREEN'S ONE-SHOT COMIX 2, and Gaither and R. K. Sloane's FRESH MEAT ONE. 50¢ each, plus 1 22¢ stamp per 3 minis. FAN'TOONS 14-15 is #1.39 from Edd Vick, POB 3008, Richardson, TX 75083-3008.* Jim Williams" SKINBOY: DEAD LOVE is 75¢ pp from him, 2109 N W Irving, #414, Portland, ORE 97210.* MODERN ART COMIX 1 is 50¢/stamp from Alex Rosmarin, 1211 Dusky Thrush, Austin, TX 78746.* RABID DUCK 1 and VEGGIES IN SPACE are 50/st each from Chris Sharpe, 2643 N W 49th, Okla City, Oklahoma 73112.* ZABAWNY 3 and 4 are 25/st ea from POB 3433, MM STA, Chicago, IL 60654.* THE BOOK/POSSESSION and INTO THE ABYSS are 50/stamp each from Bill Ehmann, 1595 Herbert Street, Apt 12., Santa Rosa, CA 95401.* DADA GUMBO 9 is $1/stamp from Dale Luciano, 810 Glendale Ave., Ashland, ORE 97520.* GOSKY COMICS is $2.50 pp from Dolphin Moon, POB 22262, Baltimore, MD 21203. Cover by Margot and inside a "possible origin story" of Morty the Dog by Steve Willis.* SPLATTER 4 is $3 pp from 4080 Garden City Rd., Richmond. B C Canada V6X 2K1.* EL VIBORA 82 is $7 pp from J. M. Berengueur, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona SPAIN.94 pages of color sex, violence, & ?* Randy Maxson has collected his work into THE GEEK BOOK. $6 from Zeke Publishing Co., 56-A Bowdoin St., Malden, MA 02148.* STEEL PULSE 2 is $2 from Dennis J. Pimple, POB 1348, Denver, COLO 80201. 6x9 full-sized comic.

ALTERNATIVES: CEREBUS 90, 91, and THE PUMA BLUES 3 from Aardvark-Vanaheim.* Steve Lafler's DOGBOY 2 (new work--now published by Fantagraphics).* GRENDEL 3 from Comico.* TALES OF THE BEANWORLD 5 and THE DREAMERY 2 from Eclipse. The latter is an illustrated version of Carroll's ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND by Lela Dowling. The art is more Disney than Tenniel. There are a number of artistic errors which probably won't bother anyone but me. Like the missing pockets in Alice's apron in the first part. Where is she going to put the things she uses during the story? Alice didn't break the White Rabbit's window. The way Lela show's it, Alice would have cut her arm to ribbons. The way her foot is stuck in the fireplace, she could not have kicked Bill upward. Alice did not braid her hair, but then this IS an adaptation, so I expect we must accept the same kind of silliness that ruined the Disney film of ALICE.* NEIL THE HORSE 13 is out from Renegade.* THE PIZZ tells me a young man in Ohio has ripped off SKRIT, put his own name on it, and is advertising it for sale. SKRIT belongs to the PIZZ who drew it and anyone who would pull something like this deserves only contempt. Tracing is low enough, but this?* Telegraph Avenue is down to one Comic Book store now. Best of Two Worlds closed this past week, a mixture of bankruptcy and landlord greed. Another factor is comic glut. There are too many, too expensive comics now on the market. The newcomer has no idea what to buy and usually just stays with a few old standbys. Many of these comix have nice covers, but nothing inside to justify a full comic book. I expect a serious comix recession due to this excess. C.G.

CRUMB AGAIN

If you think Mr. Natural is safely salted away in a mental hospital, unable to do any further damage to the public psyche, guess again. He's back in Crumb's HUP, an intense, acerbic cross-section of the American post-sixties consciousness. The old guru shakes up a complacent Flakey Foont, now permanently married with a couple of children. Nor are you free of Crumb's personal sex life, particularly his penchant for women with large round bouncy buttocks. I know, I know, a lot of you folks think Crumb just makes up all that stuff, that he doesn't really daydream vulture demonesses, but you'd be wrong. Few people have ever confessed as honestly in comic art as R. C., the Henry Miller of the comix world. A bit of exaggeration perhaps in his anthropomorphic cartoons, but the underlying thread is autobiographically true from ZAP and BIG ASS through DIRTY LAUNDRY and now HUP. Back in

BUT IF YOU'RE A REAL SON-OF-A-BITCH IN THE WORLD, RUTHLESS, UNSCRUPULOUS, TAKING WHAT YOU WANT... THE WOMEN WILL FALL AT YOUR FEET... YOU'LL HAVE TO BEAT THEM OFF WITH A STICK... THAT'S BEEN MY OBSERVATION.
ONE SIDE!
MAKE WAY!
LOOK OUT!
DON'T S.O.L.

1975, there was a Hooker's Ball held at the Hilton Hotel in San Francisco. Crumb was playing with the Cheap Suit Serenaders at the time and he was picking banjo and "singing in the bathtub," when he spots Miss America from the Free Store Theater on the dance floor. She was wearing only some strands of hair on her breasts and pubes and some longer hair between her buttocks. A bit later when the band was taking a break, I spotted Crumb following that horse's tail around the ballroom. Whether he caught her or not I can't tell you Maybe that story will show up in a future issue of HUP.

HUP has politics, sex (less blatant than the younger Crumb), homelife, and opinions about everything; just what you need to cure you of all that neurotic superheroism. $2.50 from your local dealer. C.G.

WHIRRR
FOONT-OROONI.. FLAKEY O'FOONT MF'VOUT-EE!!!
OH DEAR JESUS... IT IS HIM.. OH LORD...NOW I'M IN FOR IT...OH CHRIST, I'VE HAD NIGHT-MARES ABOUT THIS MOMENT!

EPILOGUE: MY TROUBLES WITH WOMEN HAVE ENTERED A NEW PHASE THESE PAST FEW YEARS... THE OTHER MORNING I HAD A GREAT REALIZATION...
DADDY, THIS PIECE OF BREAD IS NAMED BRENDAN... BRENDAN BREAD-SLICE!!
OH, I SEE... HEH HEH
BLUMP